

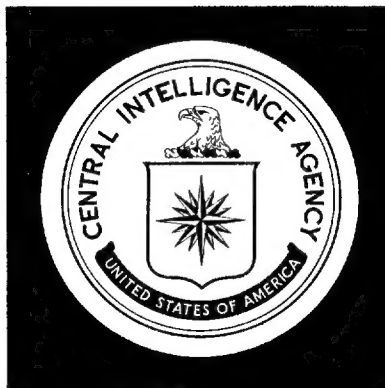
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**Secret**



# Intelligence Memorandum

*Hanoi's Intentions Over the Next Three to Six Months*

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9 February 1973

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
9 February 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

HANOI'S INTENTIONS OVER THE NEXT THREE TO SIX MONTHS\*

1. Any assessment of "Hanoi's intentions" made in mid-February 1973 must be keyed to some definite time frame. There is no evidence that the Lao Dong Politburo ("Hanoi") has abandoned its long term goal of reunifying Vietnam under Communist rule and, similarly, no sign--certainly no outward sign--that the Politburo is prepared to accept for the indeterminate future any "two Germanies" or "two Koreas" type of situation in Vietnam.

2. Whether or not the Politburo has privately decided to postpone active pursuit of the goal of reunification and, say, concentrate for the time being on rebuilding the "northern base," the Politburo has probably made some decisions on general strategic priorities over the next year or two. Nonetheless, it has probably not decided what specific courses of action it may be necessary to take. Given the equities involved and factors that have to be weighed, it is too early to make any such decisions. They will have to be framed in light of such things as the military, political and economic trends that develop within South Vietnam over the next six months or so--on the impact of this spring's and early summer's events on the relative fortunes and resultant prospects of the GVN and the PRG--on the postures of the U.S., Communist China, and the U.S.S.R., and on other regional and international developments.

3. The short run picture, however, is somewhat clearer. If, as requested, we limit ourselves to the next three to six months certain things can be said

with some confidence about Hanoi's current position and factors therein that will shape the DRV's probable moves over this near term period.\* Hanoi does need a respite and does want to devote considerable attention and effort to reconstruction in the North. It cannot yet have any confidence that, if provoked, the U.S. (i.e., President Nixon) would not again respond sharply, at least with air power. Six months is not enough time to finish rebuilding the battered southern infrastructure or fully test opportunities for making political and psychological gains in the new situation evolving in post-cease-fire South Vietnam. Thus, Hanoi will probably want to play its hand cautiously--and, on the whole, quietly--over the next few months. Furthermore, the constraints operative on Hanoi derive in part from a web of international relationships which, though fragile, look strong enough to endure for the next six months.

4. This is not to suggest that the Communists intend to observe the cease-fire with total fidelity. There will probably be renewed flurries of intensified fighting as the ICCS fans out into the countryside, with the VC/NVA (and GVN forces) seeking to make last minute improvements in their tactical positions. The Communists probably do not now plan, however, to initiate any large or even medium scale hostilities over the near term, though such plans would, of course, remain subject to review. If, for example, the Communist position relative to the GVN should begin to deteriorate dangerously, the Communists might feel impelled to resort to drastic remedies.

5. Barring developments of the kind just cited, the Communists do not appear to be under any compelling pressure to resume major military hostilities. There is nothing critical about their position in the South under present circumstances. The Paris agreement gave Hanoi its minimum essential positions: removal of the

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*\*The situation in North Vietnam with regard to manpower recruitment, logistical activity, and economic priorities suggests a continuing high degree of military preparedness sufficient to protect the option of resuming military struggle. An analysis of these factors and their significance as clues to Communist intentions is attached as an annex.*

Americans and provisions for maintenance of substantial armed forces in the South to insure the protection and preservation of the Communist infrastructure--or at least its professional cadre--in secure areas. Operating from these secure areas, the Party can send its agents on their political, psychological, and terrorist missions throughout South Vietnam without serious risk to its own survival. Hanoi will probably take advantage of the cease-fire respite to rest and refit its troops, to rebuild and improve the Communist political apparatus in the South, and to obtain a better fix on the impact of the agreement on the GVN's determination and viability.

6. Much greater emphasis seems certain to be placed on political action than has been the case in recent years. The Communists, employing popular front tactics and downplaying Communism, will seek to refurbish an image seriously damaged by the Hue massacre and similar acts of brutality. They will picture themselves as standing for peace and reconciliation against a still bellicose GVN; they will attack such GVN weak points as corruption and social injustices and advocate demobilization (of the GVN forces), the return of refugees to their ancestral lands, and release of all political prisoners. They are not likely to agree to elections run by the present GVN--certainly not any "a or b" kind of referendum or plebiscite--but they will try to place on the GVN all blame for the probable failure of the two South Vietnamese parties to reach agreement on holding elections. These positions seem well calculated to appeal to those elements of the population, exemplified by the An Quang Buddhists, who feel little commitment to either side, though they have tended in recent years to regard the GVN as the lesser evil.

7. The issue that seems to have the best chance of undermining Hanoi's commitment to the cease-fire is the central question, carefully left cloudy in the agreement, of South Vietnam's political future. Over the next three to six months, the resolution of this

issue is unlikely to proceed far enough to require a basic decision by Hanoi on further direct involvement in the South. Over the longer term, if the negotiations between the two South Vietnamese parties break down completely, the North Vietnamese might deem it necessary to intervene in the South in a way that contravened the accords. A successful police-type operation by the Thieu government against major Viet Cong assets might produce the same reaction. Hanoi's course of action under such circumstances would be influenced by a host of variables: its perception of the balance of forces between Saigon and the Viet Cong and hence of the need to intervene, the effectiveness of the supervisory mechanism, the specific points at issue between the two South Vietnamese sides, and the sort of messages received from the big powers, to name a few.

8. One area where Hanoi almost certainly will be concentrating a good deal of effort is its relations with Washington. The Communists probably believe they have little to lose and a good deal to gain in this sphere. In particular they might hope to disrupt Washington's relationship with Saigon; they might also believe that by cultivating the US they could enhance whatever leverage they have in a big-power context.

9. If Hanoi itself is reasonably firm for the outset in its commitment to the agreement's cease-fire provisions, the question naturally arises whether the Viet Cong might jump the traces on their own. It has been apparent for several months, of course, that if the North Vietnamese were more reluctant than Moscow and Peking to see a settlement come about, the PRG was more reluctant than the Hanoi leadership. Events in South Vietnam could evolve to a point where the Viet Cong felt a resumption of hostilities was their best option (or, even, an essential one). This, however, seems unlikely over the next six months. The Viet Cong almost certainly believe their most urgent task is to rebuild their

assets, both military and political; they may also be thinking that their chances of success will improve with time. Assuming our reading of their current capabilities is correct, therefore, and assuming that events do not back them into a corner, the odds still appear to be against a large-scale unilateral violation of the accords by the Viet Cong within the next six months.

10. Turning to Laos, present intense NVA offensive actions there seem designed to improve the Pathet Lao bargaining position. Once a cease-fire agreement for Laos has been reached, we would expect a sharp reduction in military activity. Allowing for a possible last minute surge of fighting, there will probably be few if any major attacks in Laos during the following six months.

11. On the issue of withdrawal, however, in many circles--including most of the western press--there is a certain evident confusion between the concept of "cease-fire" and the concept or understanding of what is called for in the Paris agreement--"cease-fire" and U.S. withdrawal seems to be widely, if erroneously, regarded as the agreement's only major components. The Communists will certainly insist on U.S. withdrawal and will probably observe--by and large--the agreement's cease-fire provisions, at least over the next three to six months. On the issue of Communist withdrawal, however, the North Vietnamese are unlikely to honor fully the provisions of the Paris agreement calling for a total withdrawal of their military forces from Laos (and Cambodia), though some combat units may be pulled back from the front lines and others withdrawn to North Vietnam. Nor is it likely that they intend to dismantle the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Here also, however, there may well be some withdrawals, and these could be sizable since the Communists presumably would not require the present heavy logistical flow and would not have to cope with bombing attacks. Nonetheless, Hanoi will almost certainly

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keep enough forces in the area to maintain a substantial military presence and sustain the essential viability of the infiltration and logistics networks.

12. Several considerations argue for maintenance of a strong NVA presence in Laos and Cambodia and for ignoring the Paris agreement's limitation of resupply to supervised "one for one" exchanges of used or worn out equipment.

a) By withdrawing all its forces from Laos and Cambodia, Hanoi would seriously curtail its options for future action throughout South Vietnam, including the option of promptly resuming large-scale warfare.

b) Such withdrawal--and/or genuine curtailment of resupply to the legal limits permitted by the Paris agreement--could have a devastating impact on Viet Cong and PRG morale.

c) Hanoi certainly recognizes that strict enforcement of the Paris agreement's withdrawal and resupply provisions would severely diminish the Viet Cong/PRG's prospects. The record of the Communists' behavior over the past two decades strongly suggests that they will not necessarily feel themselves constrained by the letter (or spirit) of the Paris agreement in this sphere and that, instead, they will test and probe to see how far they can actually go without provoking American retaliation.

13. The situation in Cambodia is more complicated than the situation in Vietnam or even Laos. Hanoi might find a Cambodian cease-fire acceptable. But the Khmer Communists, who are now doing most of the fighting, show no disposition to strike a deal. This could change, however, since the KC still depend heavily on the North Vietnamese for logistical

support. In any event, the KC do not now appear strong enough to overthrow the GKR by themselves, so that something akin to the present situation, or perhaps a fragile cease-fire, seems the most likely outlook for Cambodia over the next three to six months. Whatever the arrangements made among Cambodians, Hanoi seems certain to maintain, as in Laos, some presence in eastern Cambodia.

ANNEXCurrent North Vietnamese Military Manpower Situation,  
Logistical Activities, and Economic Priorities

1. Throughout the war in Indochina, research on North Vietnam's military and economic resources has provided insight into the enemy's strategic military intentions. Because such resources have generally been well in excess of actual requirements, the estimative process has had to take many factors into account beyond those related to raw military capability alone. Analysis of capabilities has provided a reasonable view of what the enemy could and could not do, but only a limited perspective of what he might do.

2. In the current very fluid situation, it is possible to make only the most tenuous judgments about North Vietnam's resource allocation plans, but the traditional bellwethers of military preparedness--manpower recruitment, logistical activity, and economic priorities--do permit a few conclusions concerning North Vietnam's military outlook in the very near term. The following discussion concerns these three aspects of military capability and what they tell us about North Vietnam's intentions over the next three to six months.

3. The overall view expressed in this memorandum is that North Vietnam has yet to make a clear and unequivocal commitment to foreclosing the option of resuming military struggle. Indeed, there are many signs that Hanoi continues to pursue a deliberate (though not frenetic) policy of military preparedness. Although none of our evidence points to the kind of manpower and logistic buildup observed prior to the 1968 Tet Offensive and the 1972 Spring Offensive, such activity as we do observe does not preclude resumption of large scale military endeavors by North Vietnam. Countering this evidence, there

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are considerable signs of growing interest in economic reconstruction and related "peacetime" pursuits in North Vietnam, though--understandably--very little actual performance has yet been seen.

4. In a word, Hanoi currently exhibits a cautious attitude. If the need should arise for a pursuit of its political objectives by military means, the resources are still in place and ready. Whether or not they will be used depends on political factors unrelated to the resources situation, notably the probable consequences. At the least, the judgment must by now be firmly implanted in the minds of North Vietnam's leaders that any blatant resumption of main force military activities might lead to prompt and massive retaliation by the US.

#### Logistics

5. The Communists' logistic position in South Vietnam, while strong, has not yet been rebuilt to the peak attained just before the 1972 Spring Offensive. The current logistic effort, however, probably is ahead of that achieved by this time last dry season and, if sustained for the next several months, the North Vietnamese would be capable of logistically supporting a major military activity throughout much of South Vietnam. Although post cease-fire reporting has been inconsistent, we believe that significant supply movements are continuing.

6. Beginning on 28 January, detected logistic activity in the Vinh area was curtailed sharply. By 2 February, however, vehicle and rail activity had returned to significant levels.

To date, there have been no indications that the logistical system built along the Ho Chi Minh Trail and its extensions is being dismantled. In any event,

the North Vietnamese probably could withdraw as much as 50% of their logistic personnel and still maintain a high level of resupply in a non-bombing environment.

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8. There is evidence of Communist supply movements across South Vietnam's borders farther south.

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Vehicles are also moving supplies south through Cambodia to COSVN and on into South Vietnam. On 4 February 75 loaded trucks were observed moving south from Cambodian border base areas toward the Tay Ninh Province/GVN MR-3 area. Moreover, in Communist-controlled parts of Quang Ngai Province, there are recent indications that over-the-beach infiltration of supplies is occurring. To reduce the logistics burden from external sources, the Communists apparently intend to meet more of their requirements internally than in the past, by improving access to local markets and by manufacturing small ordnance items in workshops in southern South Vietnam.

9. In North Vietnam the Communists have undertaken other measures to ensure the continuing viability

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of their logistic system. Between 15 and 23 January, they restored through rail service from the China border to Vinh. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Finally, the North Vietnamese are resuming maritime activities--domestic and international. All of these developments should enhance North Vietnam's short- and long-term logistic capabilities.

10. In summary, the North Vietnamese logistic system has been operating in high gear for several months, and there does not appear to have been a marked slowdown coincident with the cease-fire. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The result is that substantial quantities of supplies have already filtered into most parts of South Vietnam, and as the peak dry season months progress, a sustained effort would place the North Vietnamese in a very strong logistic position.

#### Manpower

11. Manpower indicators, both in North Vietnam and throughout Indochina, suggest that North Vietnam intends to maintain a strong military posture while warily observing cease-fire developments. Most evidence suggests that Hanoi's likely path in South Vietnam for the immediate future will be keyed to defense and consolidation of occupied areas, strengthening of the infrastructure, command reorganization, and maintenance of a capability to resume main force offensive activity, should that decision be taken. The principal constraints under which North Vietnam operates are not those of manpower availability or forces in-place but are considerations of possible US retaliation for serious and protracted cease-fire violations.

Capabilities

12. In North Vietnam, available evidence suggests a rather normal pattern of recruiting practices following the cease-fire agreement. The traditional December-January induction phase apparently continued through mid-January in some provinces, with only minor dislocation resulting from LINEBACKER II. Limited evidence suggests that the spring induction phase--which normally commences in March-April--will be held as scheduled. For example, a 17 January Hanoi Moi article stated that "youth were making themselves physically fit to be ready to leave for military service during the spring inductions." Currently, there does not appear to be a "crash" recruitment program, supporting the view that Hanoi is "watching and waiting."

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13.

Thus, the infiltration flow has, at least temporarily, been halted. This suggests that Hanoi is now observing the cease-fire infiltration prohibition; however, this flow could resume at any time. The troops inducted during the December-January conscription phase will be trained and available for infiltration during the current 3- to 6-month period.

14. Given the current Communist order of battle and force distribution, VC/NVA forces in South Vietnam have a reduced capability over the next three to six months to initiate major offensive operations similar to those of the spring of 1972. This appears to be the case throughout South Vietnam, except for northern MR-1, where enemy combat forces are estimated to be at about the same level as their peak 1972 offensive strength. This is not to say that the Communists could not score some temporary gains by seizing

additional territory if they chose to violate the cease-fire, but VC/NVA forces probably would not be able to take and hold any major, well-defended GVN target--as exemplified by the recent military confrontation over Tay Ninh City.

### Intentions

#### Military

15. At the present time, the signs indicating North Vietnam's possible courses of action in the near future are mixed. There is evidence of intentions to make use of the military forces in place in South Vietnam to build a political base for a struggle in that sphere; there is equally good evidence of planning for military contingencies.

16. Throughout South Vietnam the VC and NVA forces are basically in a defensive military posture. What limited information we have suggests that Communist intentions in the near term are to strengthen command structures of units now deployed and to hold onto territory now occupied. Communist local forces apparently intend to continue to take advantage of targets of opportunity in populated areas. Beyond this, there is no current evidence to suggest more elaborate military plans in the next three to six months. However, in many parts of South Vietnam--particularly MRs 1 and 2--substantial main force offensive activity could be launched with little or no advanced warning.

#### Political

17. Throughout South Vietnam there have been indications that the Communists are devoting a substantial portion of their efforts to rebuilding the VC political apparatus, and the North Vietnamese are assisting in this effort. In Phu Yen Province, for example, the VC are selecting their most trusted "hard-core" cadre to become permanent residents of a



particular hamlet or village. The primary objective is to ensure a greater degree of VC political control during the cease-fire period. In Quang Ngai Province, the Communists have created a new organization tasked with the responsibility for waging a political struggle during the early stages of the cease-fire period. Entitled the "Vietnamese People's United Committee in South Vietnam," this apparatus is to encompass a number of previously established sections of the VC political organization at the district level and below, such as those for security, military proselyting, and propaganda. Efforts such as these are undoubtedly being launched in other provinces of the country and probably will intensify in coming months.

18. A COSVN resolution issued late in January has focused on the importance of the political struggle, emphasizing such political activities as local proselyting and subverting the GVN's local militia forces. However, the resolution also emphasizes the continued development of the Communist combat forces in case hostilities resume or clashes with ARVN occur.

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### Economic

19. In inspecting economic factors that might provide evidence of North Vietnam's intentions, it is important to remember that the Vietnam cease-fire is a new learning experience for Hanoi. The sorts of contingencies for which Hanoi will plan over the next 3 to 6 months will be constantly sifted and re-evaluated in the light of the emerging new relationships with Washington and Saigon.

20. At the present time--understandably--North Vietnam has yet to get a large-scale industrial reconstruction program off the ground. We have seen some

evidence of the return of a few technicians from other Communist countries and the makeshift repair of vital electric power facilities, but as yet no signs that major rebuilding is under way.

21. Whether or not the North Vietnamese intend to work generally within the frame of the peace settlement, they will probably begin their reconstruction efforts by surveying damage and determining what machinery has been saved or can be salvaged. Should they conclude that consolidating the currently dispersed industry is an acceptable risk, they would then need to choose sites for the use of the surviving equipment, assemble work forces for both cleanup and subsequent plant operation, and relocate some transportation equipment for factory supply and distribution. Such a major program would, at a minimum, take 3 or 4 months, even if done hastily.

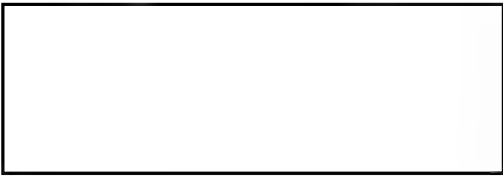
22. As the North Vietnamese become more accustomed to freedom from bombing and mining, certain more clearly defined courses of action reflecting a commitment to peacetime planning may emerge. For example, if the DRV intends to adhere to the broad terms of the cease-fire, they would likely feel it safe to redevelop extractive industries for mineral exports. They would then probably invite Japanese and other non-Communist raw material buyers to discuss seriously repair and expansion of existing facilities. Other projects that might at least get under way in the next 6 months, if the North Vietnamese are really confident that there will be no more US bombing and/or mining, would include: resuming work on the Bac Giang Chemical Fertilizer Plant, which was at an advanced stage of construction in 1965 but has since lain idle; repairing damage at the Viet Tri Chemical Complex, the Thai Nguyen Iron and Steel Combine, and textile plants at Nam Dinh and Hanoi; going ahead with plans to build a new capital city, on which

work was initiated in 1971. At this admittedly early point, none of the above steps has been observed.

23. We should, of course, bear in mind that North Vietnamese officials and media have already commenced speaking in glowing terms of reconstruction. Similarly, Hanoi has already begun to solicit economic aid for reconstruction. This sort of activity, however, is not conclusive. Much of the machinery and equipment needs in a reconstruction period are consistent with remobilization for warfare, and there is no serious domestic cost to broad discussion of reconstruction.

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10 February 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Indochina Matters

1. Attached is the printed version of the memorandum on Hanoi's intentions that we sent to the White House as part of the package sent down on the evening of 9 February.

2. Per your suggestion, we talked to Latimer on 9 February and I have talked to him again this morning (10 February). Our pitch was that the situation in Laos had certainly not improved in the last few days and in fact the battlefield situation -- especially in MR's I, III and IV -- had gotten precipitously more parlous, though, not (yet) to the point of collapse. Latimer has assured us that this is the line the NSC Staff has been giving Henry over the past several days. It is also the line that the Mission [redacted] [redacted] has been emphasizing in its briefs right up to the moment of Kissinger's departure for Hanoi. [redacted]

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4. Latimer assured me that Kissinger is very much on notice about the diceyness of the situation with Laos and such notice is amply documented in the record. Actually, the Laos situation -- at least in MR IV -- is a trifle brighter today, partly as a result of a visit by General Vogt (and senior staff) to Pakse which had the happy consequence of unsnarling some air support problems.

5. In addition to the problems in Laos, there has been quite heavy action around Quang Tri where, on 9 February, GVN Marine and air borne positions took more than 1400 rounds of artillery and mortar fire. If this kind of activity continues sporadically during next week (and I believe it probably will), I plan to send Henry a private note warning him bluntly that the North Vietnamese -- in every sphere -- are going to press up to the point where we react. Their behavior will be similar to behavior all parents have experienced in their adolescent offspring: pushing in every direction to ascertain if there are indeed limits to parental tolerance and, if so, just where those limits are.

George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

9 FEB 1973

PLEASE RELAY THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE TO DR. KISSINGER:

1. After musing on our 6 February telephone conversation and taking counsel with some of my colleagues, I offer the following views, which my colleagues also share, on why the DRV leadership wanted to have you come to Hanoi.

2. The Politburo's motives probably cover a fairly broad spectrum, ranging from simple human curiosity to more elaborate and arcane raisons d'etat. I would not be at all surprised if Le Duc Tho wanted to show you off (perhaps thus providing proof for some of the tales he has been relating). I also suspect that his Hanoi associates have a genuine desire to see you for themselves, at close range and in the flesh.

3. On a larger, less personal scale, Hanoi's objectives lie much more in the realm of symbolism and atmospherics than concrete content or immediate substance. The North Vietnamese probably think they have a better chance of nailing down questions of postwar political and economic relations with the U.S. by talking directly with you, but symbolic and atmospheric considerations (not efficiency or ease) would have shaped their preference for Hanoi as the site for these discussions.

4. When you and President Nixon visited Peking, I am sure your hosts were exquisitely courteous. I am equally sure that they knew full well



that -- no matter what was actually said or done during your visit -- this visit would be instantly and instinctively construed by Chinese (of all political persuasions) throughout the world as barbarian chiefs coming to pay tribute to the celestial emperor at the seat of civilization -- which, to most Chinese, is the right and proper thing for barbarians to do when the stars are running on their true courses and the universe aligned in proper order. Hanoi's rulers will be playing similar themes, at least in a muted minor key. No matter to what extent your hosts honor their pre-visit promises regarding minimum publicity, you had better be resigned to the fact that they will play your visit -- at least to Vietnamese audiences, who will be predisposed to read the symbols in this fashion anyway -- as proof of Hanoi's "victory" which you have come to acknowledge. Be equally assured that any aid agreements which emanate from your visit (or can be made to look as if they did) will be at least internally advertised as "reparations" or a defeated enemy's "tribute".

5. Another plus for your visit, in Hanoi's eyes, is that it is bound to irritate Saigon and fan the paranoid suspicions for which our allies -- like virtually all Vietnamese -- have an ineradicable penchant. Though this may not have been in the cards when the visit was first broached by your hosts, as things have worked out, Saigon gets Vice President Agnew but Hanoi gets Henry Kissinger.

6. In addition to wanting to score points on (and nettle) Saigon, Hanoi also wants to show off to (and, perhaps, preen before) Moscow and Peking.

Indeed, one may legitimately wonder if Hanoi would not like to cultivate a measure of bilateral relations with Washington that could serve as a kind of anchor to windward if relations were to chill between Hanoi and (reciprocally) its two primary communist patrons, particularly Peking. While Hanoi very much wants to project to South Vietnam the suggestion that the latter's fate is being settled by other, more powerful parties behind South Vietnam's back, Hanoi is very sensitive to any atmospheric (let alone substantive) hint that the DRV's fate is being arranged by big powers through relationships in which Hanoi does not directly participate.

5. Finally (though this probably does not exhaust the range of operative motives), Hanoi wants to set a symbolic seal on the Paris agreement -- or at least its interpretation thereof. The DRV's leaders probably attach great importance to the visit -- and will be closely scrutinizing its evolution -- as an omen of US intentions regarding Indochina. The North Vietnamese -- in their propaganda and among themselves -- have consistently pointed to US disengagement from the Indochina struggle as the chief accomplishment of the recently completed negotiations. Just as consistently, however, they have evinced nagging residual doubts about our sincerity on this score. Thus they probably welcome the visit for the reassurance they hope it will connote, but their concerns are not likely to be completely allayed. Indeed, if you take this occasion to remind your hosts that we will not be satisfied with battlefield quiet alone but

really expect all foreign forces -- theirs included -- to be withdrawn from Laos and Cambodia, and the Paris agreement's resupply provisions to be strictly adhered to, you will undoubtedly find your hosts' cordiality perceptibly strained.

Best regards,

George